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## General

Benin, formerly Dahomey, is bounded on the E by Nigeria, on the N by Niger and Burkina Faso, on the W by Togo, and on the S by the Gulf of Guinea. Its coast, 65 miles long, is flat and sandy with scattered lagoons and mangrove swamps.

The country extending inland is flat and covered with tropical vegetation. The ground rises gradually, about 50 miles inland, to a plateau that attains elevations of 304 to 487m.

The far N region of the country consists of a featureless plateau that attains an elevation of about 760m and slopes down toward the Niger River, on the N border.

The climate is equatorial in the coastal region, with a long rainy season from March to July and a short rainy season from October through November. The dry season increases away

from the coast, with some inland areas having rain only between May and September.

The country has average temperatures of 27.8°C in January and 25°C in July.

## Buoyage System

The IALA Buoyage System (Region A) is in effect. See Chart No. 1 for further IALA Buoyage System information.

## Currency

The official unit of currency is the franc CFA (French African Community franc), consisting of 100 centimes.

## Government

Benin changed from a Marxist-Leninist state in 1989 to a pluralist democracy. The Parliament consists of an 83-member National Assembly, elected by proportional representation for 4-year terms, and a 30-member Advisory Social and Economic Council.

A new constitution was introduced by a referendum vote in 1990. It provides for a presidential regime. The President, who



Flag of Benin

is the head of state, is directly elected for renewable 5-year terms. The Prime Minister is the head of the government. The legal system is based on French civil law and customary law. The capital is Porto-Novo.

Holidays

The following holidays are observed:

New Year's Day	January 1
Martyrs' Day	Varies
Easter Sunday	Varies
Labor Day	May 1
Whitsunday	Varies
Fete des Forces Armees Popu- laires du Benin	October 26
National Day	November 30
Christmas Day	December 25
Production Day	December 31

The Islamic holidays of Ramadan and Tabaski, the dates of which vary from year to year and are subject to the appearance of the moon, are also observed.

Industries

The major industries are palm-oil processing, cement, sugar, livestock raising, forestry, chemicals, paper, and textiles. An offshore oilfield is being developed. Crops include cassava, yams, maize, sorghum, millet, beans, rice, groundnuts, cotton, suga rcane, coffee, and tobacco.

Languages

The official language is French. The tribal languages of Fon and Yoruba are used in the S region and at least six other tribal dialects are used in the N.

Time Zone

The Time Zone description is ALFA (-1). Daylight Savings Time is not observed.

**World Time Zone Chart**  
<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/ref/pdf/802801.pdf>

U.S. Embassy

The U.S. Embassy is situated at Rue Caporal Bernard Anani, Cotonou. The mailing address is B. P. 2012, Cotonou.

**U. S. Embassy Benin Home Page**  
<http://usembassy.state.gov/benin>